

Message Text

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SUBJ: NEW GOVERNMENT CONTROLS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

REF: BELGRADE A-487

1. SUMMARY: SERBIAN ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES HAVE APPROVED TWO CHANGES IN LAW ON HIGHER EDUCATION. CHANGES, WIDELY BELIEVED TO STEM FROM CASE OF "BELGRADE EIGHT", SIGNIFICANTLY TIGHTEN POTENTIAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER BELGRADE UNIVERSITY. FACULTY MEMBERS INDICATE STRONG DISAPPROVAL OF NEW MEASURES BUT SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF SIGNIFICANT PROTEST NOW. END SUMMARY

2. TWO CHANGES IN LAW ON HIGHER EDUCATION WERE APPROVED NOV 11 BY TWO COMMITTEES OF SERBIAN ASSEMBLY, ACCORDING TO NOV 12 POLITIKA. THE FIRST REQUIRES ASSEMBLY CONFIRMATION ON APPOINTMENT OF HALF MEMBERSHIP OF FACULTY COUNCILS. THESE MEMBERS WERE FORMERLY APPOINTED DIRECTLY BY NON-UNIVERSITY ORGANIZATIONS, WHICH THEY REPRESENT. ORGANIZATIONS WILL NOW ONLY NOMINATE THEIR REPRESENTATIVES FOR ASSEMBLY CONFIRMATION. OTHER HALF OF FACULTY COUNCILS WILL STILL CONSIST OF REPRESENTATIVES OF TEACHING STAFFS, STUDENTS, AND OTHER EMPLOYEES OF FACULTY.

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3. SECOND CHANGE PERMITS ASSEMBLY, IF IT FINDS SERIOUS HARM TO

SOCIAL INTERESTS FROM THEIR ACTIVITIES, TO SUSPEND RESPONSIBLE INSTRUCTORS FOR AN INDEFINITE PERIOD. THESE SUSPENDED PERSONNEL WOULD BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE DRAWING THEIR SALARIES UNTIL THEY EITHER FIND A NEW JOB OR QUALIFY FOR RETIREMENT, REPORTED POLITIKA.

4. UNIVERSITY LC COMMITTEE MEMBER REFUSED TO COMMENT ON CHANGES IN LAW, SAYING ONLY THAT HE AND OTHER LC MEMBERS REGARDED IT AS "VERY SENSITIVE ISSUE." PHILOSOPHY FACULTY PROFESSOR ASSESSED THE CHANGES AS SERIOUS MATTER AND INDICATED THAT STAFF WAS VERY UNHAPPY AT ASSEMBLY DECISION. HOWEVER HE SAW VERY LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF ACTIVE PROTEST BY INSTRUCTORS AT FACULTY, INDICATING FACULTY GOOD NAME HAD BEEN SULLIED ENOUGH DURING PREVIOUS CONTROVERSY. ECONOMIC FACULTY PROFESSOR EXPRESSED VERY DIM VIEW OF EVIDENT TIGHTENING UP BY GOVERNMENT ON MEMBERS OF FACULTIES. HE ASSESSED NEW MEASURES AS REVERBERATION OF BELGRADE EIGHT AFFAIR. BOTH PROFESSORS INDICATED AWARENESS OF (AND SENSITIVITY TOWARD) PROBABLY UNFAVORABLE INTERNATIONAL REACTION.

5. COMMENT: PRIMARY SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANGES IS MOVE TO MODIFY SELF-MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AS PREVIOUSLY PRACTICED AT BELGRADE UNIVERSITY AND CONSEQUENT INDICATION OF ASSEMBLY LACK OF FAITH IN PREVIOUS ARRANGEMENTS. THE CHANGES SO FAR SEEM TO BE AIMED AT FUTURE CASES SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE BELGRADE EIGHT RATHER THAN AT THE EIGHT THEMSELVES, ALTHOUGH THEORETICALLY NEW PROVISIONS COULD BE APPLIED TO THE EIGHT DISSIDENT PROFESSORS WERE THEY TO ENGAGE IN FUTURE ACTIVITIES WHICH AUTHORITIES FIND TROUBLESOME.

6. WE BELIEVE FIRST CHANGE WAS POSSIBLY INSPIRED BY VOTE IN PHILOSOPHY FACULTY COUNCIL LAST JULY WHICH CLEARED THE EIGHT. IN THAT VOTE, TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS VOTED WITH SOLID BLOC OF FACULTY REPRESENTATIVES TO CLEAR ACCUSED PROFESSORS. THUS, CHANGE WOULD BE MEANT TO PROVIDE ASSEMBLY WITH CONTROL ON QUALITY OF THESE OUTSIDE REPRESENTATIVES TO PREVENT SUCH DEFECTIONS IN THE FUTURE.

7. SECOND CHANGE WILL ENABLE IMMEDIATE AND INDEFINITE SUSPENSION OF OFFENDING PROFESSORS WHILE PROBLEM OF LONG DELAY IN RESOLUTION OF SOLVING SUCH CASES THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS. UNIVERSITY LC SUBMITTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF EIGHT PROFESSORS IN JANUARY, BUT NOT UNTIL JULY WAS FINAL VOTE TAKEN.
MILLER

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